

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Date: November 7, 2002
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*****For Immediate Release*****

Washington State Patrol WATCH Program

The Washington State Patrol provides Washington State conviction criminal history record information (CHRI) to the public on-line through the Internet using the Washington Access to Criminal History (WATCH) application. The State Patrol implemented the initial WATCH application in 1998 and an upgraded version in June 2002. WATCH can be accessed through any personal computer with connectivity to the Internet at <https://watch.wsp.wa.gov>.

Release of conviction CHRI is permitted under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 10.97.050 (Criminal Records Privacy Act) and RCW 43.43.830-43.43.845 (Child and Adult Abuse Information Act). All criminal history background check responses include Washington State conviction criminal history, sex and kidnapping offender registration information, and arrests less than one year old pending disposition.

WATCH can help improve public safety by providing immediate and convenient access to Washington State criminal conviction records. The growing number of on-line background checks conducted each year is illustrated below:

<u>Year</u>	<u># of Background Checks</u>
1998	170,000
1999	367,500
2000	606,800
2001	838,000
2002	630,000 to date (January – October)

Individuals and agencies are charged a \$10.00 fee for each name and date of birth searched. Payment may be made using a credit card to pay for on-line searches; (Discover, American Express, Visa, or MasterCard) or agencies conducting large volumes of background checks may establish a monthly billing account.

Pursuant to state law, non-profit organizations licensed in Washington State are exempt from payment requirements when performing searches of convictions for crimes against children or vulnerable adults on prospective employees or volunteers. These non-profit organizations must establish a WATCH non-profit account to conduct background checks at no fee.

The WATCH application is available on line at the WATCH web site by selecting ON-LINE HELP, FORMS, and WATCH ACCOUNT APPLICATION PACKET.

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